

Leicester, Mass. Oct<sup>r</sup>. 27. 1861.

Dear friend Mary Estlin;

You may almost think me presumptuous in calling you by so familiar a title, so long is it since I wrote to you, & so little have I seemed to claim or acknowledge the friendship. Still I recur to the good old address in all good conscience and find myself, with a real pleasure, writing to you. I am not going to waste a page in excuses. You know that for nigh 2 years I have been in miserable health. ~~that~~ For a year & a quarter of that time [June 1860 to Sept. '61] I had withdrawn from my office duties and from much work of any kind, and had come home to Leicester to rest and perhaps recruit. Last fall I thought myself somewhat better, but winter and spring brought me back to ~~weakness~~, illness, & inefficiency, and it has not been until early in August last that I have begun to feel at all well. During this whole <sup>time</sup> ~~year~~ I have avoided all <sup>letter</sup> writing not absolutely necessary, for my dyspepsia (it was a form of that) made all writing laborious and at times irksome. I have scarcely written at all to my English & Scotch friends, and to W.D. Webb only on business, and occasional topics of interest - but not once, where I longed to, five times. I hope better days are in store for me. Since the middle of Sept<sup>r</sup> - when my friend E.H. Heywood (who took my post when I left it) was attacked with something like brain



fever. I have spent much of the time at the office in Boston, going there usually on Monday & returning home on Thursday or Friday. I attempt no more than I feel equal to, and as yet do not find myself the worse. Occasionally R. D. Webb tells me about you; but he generally writes at a furiously rapid pace, & touches only upon points right at hand. — Let me not seem to do dear W. Webb any injustice; — ~~he~~ I regard him as a most thoughtful and unselfish man, with a heart full of generous & disinterested affection for his friends, to oblige whom no pains or sacrifice is too great; but I need not say this to you, who must know him very thoroughly.

Again, I am impelled to write you now, because I have carefully read every line and word of the new Life of John Brown, and must needs tell you what I think of the book, — if I can. I am thoroughly pleased & satisfied with it; it is as if we had had no life of him before, and indeed we had none, which touched the inner life of John Brown as this book does. It is in striking contrast to Redpath's Life in every particular of style, tone, method, & presentation of the subject. Without the least exaggeration, it does full justice to Captain Brown's character, and makes the reader understanding & admiringly at home with



him. Mr. & Mrs. Webb have shown themselves  
good editors and authors. On a popular subject,  
the admirable arrangement of the book, and the  
successful progress & development of character  
in it, would command for them praise and  
thanks. I believe, as yet, they have not received  
much of either in your country. I hope the publisher  
is doing his duty in making the book known. To you,  
as the originator of the book, without whose  
encouragement and support the Webbs could not  
have gotten on, nor <sup>the world</sup> we had the book, our best  
and warmest thanks are due. You have mine  
most cordially, and I am sure you will have  
those of many, very many more, who are yet  
to read it. Unfortunately few <sup>here</sup> have  
read it yet, or had a chance to do so. The copy,  
(which I hold as a gift from yourself, Mr. Webb,  
& Mr. Webb, bearing date August 1<sup>st</sup>), in my  
possession, was sent to me by the hand of Dr. Cheever.  
He brought <sup>(to Mr. Brown, and Mr. Kim)</sup> 2 others, and these 3 are, so far as I  
can learn, the only ones in America. Arriving  
home the mid. of Aug<sup>t</sup>, <sup>Dr. C.</sup> & did not deliver these  
books until the mid. of September - near the end,  
in fact, - a negligence quite censurable. Why  
I did not receive my promised book, I could not  
understand, nor explain - save on the supposition  
that it was not ready to come by Dr. C., and



that Webb was awaiting another copy. At last it appeared — a solitary copy for all our friends to look at. I was in Boston, when it came to hand, and so several had an opportunity to see it. Upon a somewhat hasty reading of it, I prepared two short notices of it, for the Standard & Liberator, merely as announcing the coming volume. Then there was another delay, <sup>almost</sup> ~~quite~~ as unaccountable; viz. that the copies of the book which the A.S. Office had ordered did not leave Liverpool until <sup>nearly</sup> ~~about~~ the middle of Sept<sup>r</sup>, & by consequence have but just arrived in Boston & were not out of the Ship when I came from Boston on Thursday last. I expect to get them this week and to put them immediately in binders' hands, — they being now only in the sheets. I do not think any harm will come of this delay, — yet I am sorry it should have happened. — I very much like the neat manner in which the book is printed; — paper, type, sizes, are all in good taste; and Mr. W. has evidently done his best to make a neat and attractive volume. — In the Appendix, the article (from the Standard) ascribed to Oliver Johnson was by Edmund Quincy; but as it appeared <sup>as a leading editorial</sup> anonymously, & O. J. is the acknowledged Editor, the mistake was natural. The book is remarkably free from even the ordinary little inaccuracies. When the book is for sale and in readers' hands, I hope and doubt not we shall have full notices of it.

ms. B. 1. 7. 6 v. 14, p. 84  
Since last I wrote you [what a change has come over our country, and over the aspect of the Anti-Slavery cause! We do not ourselves fully comprehend it. From a long-protracted peace extending over the entire life-time of the most of our people, we are



Suddenly plunged into War, and into that worst of all wars, a  
 Civil War, - tho' it is not, as some of the old Conservatives here still  
 insist on calling it, a war among brethren; for there has not been,  
 for a long time, any really fraternal and friendly feeling between the  
 North & South, and our States have been United in little else than in  
 name. A fierce, bitter, unrelenting ~~propagandism~~ of Slavery has  
 characterized the South, - of course with exceptions ~~there~~; but this  
 has been the united & determined purpose of all the leaders, & they  
 have inspired the bulk of their people with the same evil spirit, partly  
 by their deceptive representations of the benefits <sup>to</sup> accruing to the South,  
 and partly by false representations of the feelings & designs of the North.  
 In this Rebellion the South has been hitherto remarkably united; no  
 doubt that much dissent is suppressed by the absolute peril to life wh.  
 would follow its expression. On the other hand the North has been  
 united, to a degree which the most sanguine person among us never  
 anticipated, & the most far-seeing had never believed possible. And  
 it is certain that the anti-slavery feeling has been the strongest  
 motive power yet shown in the North. And had it been encouraged,  
 instead of being discouraged by the Government, as it hitherto has  
 been, it might have been efficiently organized, & before this w<sup>d</sup>  
 have been very sure to have given us successes, where now we  
 can count only defeats. There are many reasons, which give  
 the Southern population the superiority, at present, in the use of arms  
 and in the battle-field, which I need not stop to enumerate here.  
 These things are getting more nearly equalized. The Northern men  
 are naturally, in courage & endurance, superior to the South, - as Kansas  
 proved in many instances. And I trust to see this demonstrated fully.



I trust that Victories are in store for us, not merely over the Southern States (which is not in itself of so much importance) but over the Slaveholders & their Army, and over Slavery. Until we do ~~make~~ give the War this character, it is of comparatively small importance. I allow, whether we have Successes or reverses, tho' not entirely so, even in this view. It cannot be the same thing to the future of America, to the world at large, nor even to the poor Slave-victims <sup>themselves</sup>, whether the Southern Confederacy with its theory of labour, its corrupt social state, its General demoralization, its absolute despotism, its intellectual darkness for 99-hundredths of its population, triumphs, or whether the North, with its Democratic equality of rights & privilege & opportunity, its universal common-school education, its well-paid labour, its intellectual activity, and its superior moral standard, triumphs. But the Northern triumph, if it fails to destroy Slavery, root and branch, will be a dishonorable one, and as such will degrade, not elevate it. The struggle now touches this very point, and the encounter of ideas, logic, eloquence is the keenest I have ever known in this country. To say nothing of the Anti-Slavery papers, speakers, and agencies proper, - Such men as Cheever, and Conway, and Dr. Tyng, and Brownson, and a strong array of the Clergy of all Denominations, (the Clergy never were doing so well for Antislavery as they are now, - tho' that is not necessarily saying very much) are throwing their heaviest influence, - much of it incessantly, - in favour of Emancipation Immediate and Direct. We have issued a Petition to Congress, asking for this, which is receiving signatures extensively, tho' not finding favour in the larger commercial towns and cities &



Some of our friends abroad have wondered at the American Abolitionists, because they have not denounced this War, and named the Country against it. And some of them even think that we have abandoned our old ground & testimonies. I do not think there is reason for our friends abroad to feel so. We have not changed our faith and reliance upon the moral weapons as really the efficient ones in our cause. But what ~~was~~ that to do with this emergency? Our Government was threatened with assassination at the hands of the most unscrupulous and unprincipled & band of destructionists that this Western world has ever seen, — allied together, too, for the most infamous of purposes, the Establishment of a Slave Empire and the Revival of the Slave Trade; — this, in all its revolting details, openly avowed, argued, & justified. What was our Government, what were our Northern People, to do? There is the whole question. This Conflict was forced upon the North. I admit, I know, as an Abolitionist I have long known, lamented, and laboured to expose, the fact, that had the North met the insolent demands and aggressions of the Slave Power 40 years ago (or even 20 — perhaps 10) with a just & proper spirit of resistance, instead of with so many & repeated concessions, of an humiliating & base nature, this state of things would not have been reached, & war might have been avoided. This is barely probable; barely possible for 20 years or more past. But neither was this the question. What was to be done by the U.S. Govt. when the Slaveholding States revolted, turned traitors, turned its arms upon National defences, plundered National property, and marched an army into Virginia for the capture of Washington? Could it do anything less, or else, than join issue and meet the conflict, as it best might? Evidently it could



then do nothing else whatever. The judgment of the entire North of all parties, sects, and sections, was perfectly contemporaneous to this effect. The decision was absolutely unanimous, with the exception of the few at the North who, for the first time in their lives came forth strong Peace men, and whose whole career had proved them base panders to Slavery, - perfectly willing that slavery should live & thrive to any extent, so that they could keep in power, and push a profitable trade. The Abolitionists have only recognised this state of things - hesped to expose the insidious plot of the Slave Power, - and declared the Government to be, on its own premises and avowed principles, clearly right in opposing and crushing this Rebellion by every means in its power. Is it not so? Could they do else? Would they not be craven traitors to humanity, the world over, not to resist to the last the Slaveholders' Rebellion and desperate Schemes? To me it seems that Heaven and Earth would have cried out upon them, had they done less than they have done.

MS. B. 1. 6 v. 14 p. 299  
And now we are hoping, longing, praying, that the evil power of Slavery in our land may be stayed and stopped by this war and by the floods of light which this Contest is throwing upon the true Character of Slavery. Already numerous converts, of a most remarkable & unlooked for character, have appeared; and we are already sure that Slavery never can regain the Status it had before the Secession. Witness, Brownson of the Catholic Church, Dickinson & Butler, leading Democratic politicians, Drs. Ellis and Stebbins of the Unitarian body, & hosts of lesser lights. And, under the flood of light which pulpit, press, forum, & stump, are now pouring on the <sup>subject</sup> true Remedy. Emancipation, a vast good will of necessity be realised



even tho', for the present, we come short of the entire Abolition of Slavery itself. ~ Are you able to read our Antislavery papers now? ~~If you can, & do,~~ you will find in ~~them~~ ample corroboration of all I have been saying. ~ We are often & much discouraged, it is true, by the timidity, short-sightedness, & even pro-slavery sympathies as it wd seem, of our President & the majority of his Cabinet. But so plainly do we see the wonder-working hand of a Divine Power in this matter, & at this time, that we care less for what the Government may or may not do, knowing that the hearts of Rulers in that hand are like rivers of water, to be turned as He shall will.

Meantime, how stands Antislavery England in regard to our contest? This you can answer, perhaps, better than I. But I am forced to say that we, Abolitionists, have been very greatly astonished & <sup>grieved</sup> ~~surprised~~ at the almost universal lack of sympathy <sup>in England</sup> with our Northern people. <sup>[Of course, in this I leave the Eng. Abolitionists out of the question.]</sup> Towards us, there is a general coolness and indifference, so far as we can judge. Towards the South there is much warmth of friendships on the part of some, of entire complacency on the part of more; and of open, manly, burning rebuke and scorn, such as her purpose deserves & demands at the hand of England, scarcely a word. The neutrality of the Bo. Govt was perfectly right. How is it observed? Witness the steamers & other vessels loading openly in Brit. ports with arms, clothing, & other necessaries for the Southern States; <sup>& Rebel</sup> and the same thing, in far more numerous instances, in Brit. Colonial ports. It seems to me that this is keeping the neutrality to the ear, but breaking it to the hope and sense. There are some few most honorable exceptions. Among these stand conspicuous Thomas



Hughes, author of the "~~School Days at Rugby~~", whose two letters (the first in Macmillan's Magazine, sent me by R.D. Webb - & the second in the London Spectator, in ans<sup>r</sup>. to the Saturday Review) show an admirable understanding of the question; - Mr Forster M.P. for Bradford, whose recent <sup>lecture</sup> ~~speech~~ was luminous with clear statement and just appreciation of the subject, and especially of the real attitude of the North; the London Daily News, and the Morning Star, have had very just and excellent articles. For myself, I cannot and I do not doubt the real sentiment of the English people on Slavery, nor what it would be if duly aroused & brought out. At present I believe the designing men are drawing, if not wool, yet cotton over the eyes of your people, and are deceiving them in the same kind, if not degree, in which the Southern demagogues are deceiving the poor white people of the South. I hope we shall yet hear the voice of England - if not as yet for the North, yet <sup>(for we are not yet doing our duty)</sup> ~~yet~~ <sup>openly</sup> and unequivocally against the South, in this her guilty plan of an Empire reared on Millions of human Victims. Do I say too much when I say England is dishonored, if she does not thus <sup>building up</sup> speak out against the "Vilest system of Slavery that ever saw the Sun"? - I know, dear friend, where your heart is. Oh, how much we desire and need the voices of those who have gone before us. But we must strive to see with their anointed vision, and to speak for Justice & the Right, as they were wont to speak. And with the apostle we yet say. "Brethren pray for us - help us;" sound the alarm, for the just & right Cause labors much.

Ms. B.1.6 v.14, p.84